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ABSTRACT

The University of Alberta (Canada) has developed a range of collaborative relationships in its teacher preparation program. Over 5 years, the faculty developed collaborative relationships in five categories: (1) meta-collaboration to promote and study collaboration; (2) university students in regular classrooms during curriculum and instruction courses; (3) accommodation of junior high school students at the university for one of their required courses; (4) assignment of university faculty to school districts for supervision of practicum experiences; and (5) partnerships between postsecondary education institutions, especially between two-year programs and the university. The collaborative model has proven productive for the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, and most faculty have made extensive commitment to the model. In most cases, partnerships have improved both programs. As a result of the project seven important facts were noted: leadership and commitment must be learned from the senior administrators of both partners; creative partnerships require support and freedom from senior administration; a range of participants and purposes should be fostered; the goals of cooperating institutions do not need to be identical; the placement of personnel is important; collaboration helps establish rewarding and regenerating professional relationships; and working collaboratively is not the easy way to solve problems. (SM)

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Diverse Models of Collaboration in Teacher Education

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Introduction

In the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, as in most teacher preparation programs, we have continuously maintained invaluable collegial relationships with our counterparts in schools and government agencies. However, in 1987, our Dean, Dr. R.S. Patterson, encouraged us to consider the collaborative model as a way of giving more attention and energy to our relationships with the field.

Under the Dean's leadership, one Associate Dean position was re-defined to concentrate on relationships with educational partners and to facilitate collaborative activities. The Dean also directed our attention to selected professional literature during those early conceptualizing stages; we became aware especially of articles like those by DeBevoise and Trubowitz in Educational Leadership 1986 and adopted Shirley Hord's (1986) distinctions between models of cooperation and collaboration. Focussing the energy created by this new approach several faculty began to "hope for increased bridge building, or at least for the laying of more planks across the chasm" (DeBevoise, 1986, p. 9). We began with a mini-conference hosted by Edmonton Public

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Schools in which we explored possibilities. The next spring we held a conference on collaboration with our local school partners, showcasing the results of our first year efforts.

The following fall Dr. Carl Harris and teachers from Provo, Utah spent time with us, explaining the Brigham Young University and Larsen School partnership and practicum (Harris, n.d.). With that as our model we began to evolve patterns of practicum that fit our own context and relationships.

This emphasis on collaborative problem solving led us to give greater attention to previously established linkages and also to approach new ventures as partnerships. Using theoretical underpinnings we began relying on resources such as Clemson's (1990) comparisons of collaborative success to inform our choices. Visits to our campus by John Goodlad and Elliot Eisner provided additional inspiration and direction as we became involved in collaborative planning to forge our own models.

Models of Collaboration

In the ensuing five years our faculty has developed a range of collaborative relationships. To clarify the following descriptions, the term instructor will mean a university faculty member, teacher will mean a professional employee of a school district, student will mean a teacher in training at the university and pupil will mean a young person enrolled in an elementary or secondary school. The collaborative models can be grouped into five categories:

(1) meta-collaborative, (2) university students in schools during curriculum and instruction courses, (3) school pupils on campus for regular school courses, (4) practicum experiences, and (5) partnerships between post-secondary education institutions.

All five models would be described by Freiburg and Waxman (1990) as change directed to the meso level, linkages and partnerships between and within institutions. They also reflect several characteristics of our context. First we are a large program with over 3500 undergraduate students in the B.Ed. program, and we serve the entire northern two-thirds of our province with very little geographic overlap with other teacher preparation programs. Furthermore, like all oil-based economies, our previously comfortable funding has been curtailed during the past decade. Our publicly funded school systems typically include a Catholic and non-Catholic system for each major city, so collaborative efforts need to consider relationships between two major districts in most population areas.

Costs and Benefits. In collaborative ventures specific benefit to cost ratios are difficult to analyze because the benefits of trust and goodwill for facilitating subsequent program development is not quantifiable. However, from a fiscal perspective collaborative efforts have usually been cost neutral. The greatest cost of most education programs is professional salaries; in collaboration the same amount of salary commitment by both partners is involved, but it is

allocated differently. At times there have been increased salary commitments related to initiating a new program, but these have not been specific to the collaborative style. In a few cases one benefit of collaboration has involved one program gaining access to the equipment and mechanical resources of a partner. In these cases capital costs have been reduced for one partner and costs related to increased maintenance may be identified by the other. In a few cases additional costs are experienced by the university students.

Meta-collaboration. One model within our program is meta-collaboration -- collaboration to promote and study collaboration. Cooperation has been the focus of joint practicum committees and advisory committees for decades, but these relationships have been re-considered to maximize the partnership characteristics. Some new collaboration committees involving the university and specific school districts have also developed.

One project was developed specifically to practice and study the collaboration process. Three academic instructors helped a school in a low income area with early intervention for at-risk children. In the process of addressing oral language and reading concerns, we also developed more egalitarian ways of interacting with teachers and discussed with them the processes in which we were involved. The outcome of this was two descriptive models of early intervention using collaborative approaches (Juliebo, Ilott, & Malicky, 1989). The benefit from this relationship were

many. Through candid and informative sharing of perspectives, the participants gained an understanding of collaborative relationships, and the children received direct remedial assistance aligned with the school program.

Students in Schools. Another model focusses upon university students being involved in regular classrooms as an aspect of their curriculum and instruction (C. and I.) courses. Although in-school time is not new to our program, former relationships have been reconceptualized to maximize shared roles, and the number and frequency of contacts have been increased. Consequently, both the quality and quantity of these in-school contacts have changed. The university students' visits may occur once or twice in a 13 week term. More recently, however, several courses include weekly visits to the school. For example, a music education course has on-campus reflection and planning on Tuesday, and actual teaching of music lessons in a selected school each Thursday. Other elementary level courses in environment and early childhood are using similar models. In some cases the university is supplementing the school program.

More comprehensive collaboration occurs in other curriculum and instruction courses which are held entirely in the school -- lectures, discussions, and teaching in classrooms all occur at the school. Often the university instructor and a teacher team teach both classes, taking turns in the classroom and with university students. This pattern has been especially well developed in senior high

school drama and physical education and elementary school language arts.

Instructors involved in these programs report that benefits accrue to the school, the students and the university (R.K. Jackson, Personal communication, Dec. 18, 1991). University students benefit from learning grounded in the context in which it is to be applied, experiencing the reciprocity of theory and practice. For prospective teachers there was tremendous incidental learning regarding the interaction between professionals in schools and the substance of C. and I. courses. The university as an institution benefited from its presence in school as it exists through increased credibility in the profession, input to the academic program from the field, and improved awareness through continuing interchange. The school found that the presence of others provided a new influence, an indirect catalyst for change. Professional development for staff included involvement in student seminars, an increased sense of their own professionalism as they interacted with students, and "permission" to transcend the minutiae of everyday teaching to consider more abstract issues of education. Pupils benefited from the increased human resources in school, which allowed the development of individualized assistance beyond the level the school could typically staff.

Pupils at the University. A third pattern of collaboration of long standing has been the accommodation of

school pupils at the university for one of their required courses. This has continued in junior high industrial arts for over ten years. In this arrangement the pupils come to the university two afternoons a week, and the university students take responsibility for teaching, supervising safety, and being a resource to a small group of junior high pupils. The school staff member and the university instructor jointly supervise this course. The "real teaching" experience has been of benefit to the university students. It has also made it possible for the junior high to offer this course without having to maintain a shop facility, a considerable saving in capital costs. Of even greater importance, the school staff believes that their pupils benefit from having contact with the university campus, working directly with young people who serve as role models, and having a more advantageous adult to student ratio for individualized learning.

Practicum Courses. The move to collaboration has probably had its greatest impact in the area of in-school practicum, as several variations have emerged within this model. Under the leadership of our Associate Dean for Practicum and with the involvement of several senior faculty members there are many innovative projects underway, some in their third year of operation. The prerequisite for this level of creativity has been Dean Borys' commitment to trust the participants to evolve ways in which the practicum objectives can be met without requiring that each

development be controlled by the Practicum Office (A. Borys, Personal communication, Dec. 13, 1991). Two very diverse projects will be reported here, one in rural Alberta and another in the metropolitan area around the University.

In a remote area of northern Alberta, about 850 km north of Edmonton, the district of Fort Vermillion has had recurrent difficulty recruiting teachers. In an effort to acquaint prospective teachers with the advantages of the Fort Vermillion area, this district contributes a housing allowance to help defray costs for students wishing to complete practicum there. In addition, the teachers and supervisors in that district have collaborated with our practicum personnel to provide a high quality experience for the students who select this option. More extensive computer linkages are being piloted this winter so that students in rural placements can access resources similar to those for students in the city.

In contrast to Fort Vermillion, most of our practicum sites are in schools within the greater Edmonton area, which has a population of close to 800,000. In our immediate area we began considering the Provo, Utah model and through conversations with our school district partners, developed our own adaptations. One of our practicum arrangements, now in its third year, is to attach one senior faculty instructor to two high schools in close proximity to one another, one school from the Catholic and one from the non-Catholic school board. Averaging one day a week in the two

schools, the instructor supervises all student teachers attending both schools, conducts all staff liaison work to facilitate practicum, serves as a resource to the schools and accesses resources within the schools.

A second variation of the instructor-in-school model involves another of our senior staff who is assigned full time for a half-year to three elementary schools and 24 student teachers. In this arrangement student teachers are assigned to the entire school as opposed to being paired with a specific teacher. In the words of Borys, Browne, Samiroden and Willson (1991), the student "bonds with the school" (p. 6) before establishing loyalties to the cooperating teacher. To establish student teachers as a cohort group the instructor schedules weekly seminars to promote reflection and to allow communication and support between students, encouraging professional cooperation rather than competition. This instructor-in-school variation is in its second year, and is receiving positive reviews from school staff and university students.

Since a continuing purpose of the practicum is student mastery of effective teaching practices, one faculty member observing 24 students across different schools can become an effective advocate for changes in the university program. Pervasive weaknesses in student performance can be identified, and as an "insider" the faculty instructor can argue more acceptably for course content changes.

The cooperating schools also report a range of benefits, depending upon staff needs. For many, having a university instructor shared across several schools forms a cross-school cluster that prompts teachers from different schools to communicate with each other. Most, including Fort Vermillion, report that the process of helping students to become teachers provides the impetus for teachers and their principal to talk about teaching. This catalyst for staff renewal and improvement has recently resulted in several of our schools asking to have more student teachers, feeling that the benefit to their schools exceeds the cost in time and energy.

Partnerships in Adult Education. The last collaboration model is the partnership between institutions of post-secondary education, especially between two year programs and the university. Two arrangements developed by the Adult Career and Technology (A.C.T.) Department involve institutes of technology and vocational training centers. First, caught in the dilemma of reduced funding for capital expenses, the A.C.T. department negotiated with the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) for students from the University's industrial arts program to attend classes at NAIT for technical content related to their university program. This was begun at a time when NAIT enrollment was lower, and the additional students met their institutional needs. The benefit to university students has been access to

up-to-date equipment. The related benefit to the university has been reduction of capital expenses for equipment.

The A.C.T. Department also has a long-standing program which involves off-campus teaching and tele-conferencing to help instructors in other post-secondary institutions achieve a bachelors degree in adult education. Many college faculty were hired for their technical competence, but it has become necessary for them to acquire an academic degree as the institutions came to expect degrees for all their staff. This university outreach program was established after extensive consideration of the support to be offered by the other institutions, and delineation of the needs the institutions identified. In addition to meeting the androgogical needs of college instructors, university faculty benefit from the opportunity to dialogue with practicing adult educators and become apprised of developments within adult education programs.

Summary

In general, our faculty has made extensive commitments to the collaboration model. We do not wish to suggest that all efforts have been successful. We have one committee for collaboration that has not met for more than a year. A few relationships are tenuous. As we consider Clemson's delineation of stages of collaboration, many are entering the fourth stage; having passed through the carrot and stick, joy and puzzle stages they are now beginning the

synthesis stage of collaboration. Within this group are some that have surpassed our fondest dreams.

We are now more knowledgeable, more realistic, more effective, and at times more humble. In the process, as one would hope, we have learned many things. Some of the things learned thus far are:

1. Leadership and commitment must be from the senior administrators of both partners. This alleviates some of the difficulties that arise from the university's reward structure and also allows liaison with senior administration in partner districts. As a result of agreement among senior administrators, the climate of both institutions can foster partnerships.
2. Creative partnerships require both support and freedom from senior administration. Negotiating innovative relationships is not possible if individuals are overly constrained by narrow administrative policies.
3. A range of participants and purposes should be fostered. Not all projects need to progress to the stabilized stage of partnerships. Some linkages are appropriate for short-term activities, and the trust and goodwill developing from these may support the inter-institutional climate for more complex, long-term relationships.
4. The goals of the cooperating institutions do not need to be identical. Although shared goals should be an integral part of the arrangement, the participants can

have different but complementary goals. Stating these goals at the outset, and sharing responsibility for achieving both sets of goals is critical for success. Unstated goals may later appear to be a "hidden agenda" and thus foster distrust.

5. The placement of personnel is an important issue, because the initial success of a project is often due directly to the compatibility of the participants. First, the personnel need to be willing to assume their roles; collaboration cannot be coerced. Second the inter-institutional relationship must evolve to transcend personalities, because retaining specific individuals in designated roles for more than two years is unlikely -- career patterns and other opportunities disrupt personnel placements.
6. Collaboration helps to establish rewarding and regenerating professional relationships, increase the faculty's credibility, and improve communication between schools and faculty.
7. Working collaboratively is not the "easy" way to solve problems. Patience and success at understanding the partner's perspective require concentrated time and effort. Issues of "turf", "ego", "control", and "ownership" must be resolved. However, most participants have found that in collaboration the rewards are commensurate with the effort.

In summary, the collaborative model has been productive for the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. Because we have been encouraged and supported by Deans within the Faculty, a wide range of models has emerged. In most cases partnerships have improved both programs. We support the collaborative approach to teacher education with the realistic knowledge that such ventures take time and patience. We know that, like most things worthwhile, productive collaboration takes work.

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